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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Thursday, November 9, 1944

Subject: "'Boning Up' On Fish" Information from Office of Distribution officials,
War Food Administration.

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2 Fish have hit the front page...with a splash! Last year our choice of fish was limited. This season the fishermen...in both salt water and fresh water... have had heavy hauls. Many different kinds of fish are moving to market. We say "Variety is the Spice of Life"...yet many of us cook about the same dishes month after month. We stand in front of the fish counter and peer in at the rose fish and speckled trout, or the sprawling lobster and silver mackerel...and wonder what they taste like. Why not break away from the familiar and treat yourself to a little adventuring in fish eating?

But first of all it might be well to get acquainted with some of our fish families. We might have a school of fish, so to speak...and do a little "boning up" on the subject, as the school children say before examinations.

The rose fish you probably know, although it may have been introduced by another name. Red fish, sea perch and ocean perch are other names for the same fish. The rosefish which is only slightly pink in color is a native of North Atlantic waters...weighs about a pound and is marketed fresh or as a frozen fillet. A fillet is a lean piece of meat or fish without bones. The commercial man pronounce it "fillet" and homemakers prefer "fillay".

A frozen rosefish fillet can be thawed first or cooked immediately. If you want to fry it, salt the fish first, then dip it into a liquid...such as beaten egg milk or water...and cover it with a salted dry cereal...cornmeal or flour, cracker or bread crumbs. Fry it in hot fat...but not smoking. Cover the pan, lower the heat to moderate and turn the fish when it's brown.

Filletts and fish steaks, too, are delicious when they're broiled. Wipe the fish and salt it on both sides. Grease a shallow pan and lay the fish in with the

skin-side down. Place the fish under the flame in a preheated broiler at moderate heat, and cook for 20 to 30 minutes. If the fish is large and thick, heat it for 15 or 20 minutes first in a moderate oven before you place it under the broiler flame.

Many different kinds of fish may be cooked the same way. Small lake fish such as pike and perch are usually fried as well as two other varieties of small ocean-going fish crackers and flounders which are shipped frozen to many parts of the country. Flounders is really the family name for several kinds of fish: lemon sole, grey sole, blackbacks, yellowtails and so forth.

Every fish family has interesting characteristics, but the flounder or sole as it's sometimes called, is most unusual. It's a flat fish...weighs about 2 pounds when it goes to market. When the flounder is small it has two eyes in the usual place and it swims about quite normally. Then it spends some time growing on the floor of the ocean, resting on its side. The eye on the side next to the sand gradually moves around to the top side where it's more useful. And the color, too, is limited to the top side. When the flounder matures and leaves his sandy bed, he never rights himself again, but flounders through the water, with his 'white, blind side down and his colorful, double-eyed side up. You may swallow this story "hook, line and sinker" because it's true.

Another general favorite along the Pacific coast is Rock fish. Of course you are acquainted with salmon, halibut, and haddock which are eaten from ocean to ocean. Returning to the east coast by way of the Gulf of Mexico we find mullets in large quantities in the fish markets. The mullet is a native in the Gulf and South Atlantic waters...a one pounder that is sold whole or in fillets, and may reach you either fresh or frozen. A mullet, like a mackerel, is a fat fish and is better broiled than fried, so the fat can drain off.

Speaking of mackerel...which is a salt water fish...reminds me of a mistaken notion that some people have about mackerel and other ocean fish. Salt water fish

are not salty because they swim in the ocean. They are just as sweet and free from salt as those that are caught in the rivers and lakes. Salt fish have been cured by a salting process which is used for fish caught in lakes and rivers as well as fish caught in the oceans.

The cod fish in North Atlantic Waters have attracted attention all over the world and brought prosperity to New England fishermen for 300 years. The codfish lives on both sides of the North Atlantic. On the American coast it is found from Greenland to Delaware. Probably the largest cod on record was caught on a line trawl off Massachusetts in 1895...a monster of 211 pounds, more than 6 feet long. Fifty to sixty pound fish are not uncommon, but fish caught close to shore average 10 to 15 pounds in weight.

Fishing for cod is usually done with a "trawl line". The main line may be as much as a mile in length and lies along the bottom of the ocean floor. It's anchored at each end and has buoy lines from the anchor to the surface, each with a float so that the fishermen may row away, set other lines, then come back, find and pick the lines some time later. All along the main line, at intervals of 6 feet or so, are short lengths of twine, each with a hook. The codfish, browsing along the bottom, swallow the bait and are caught. The fishermen pick up the buoy line after the trawl line has been down several hours, then haul up the main line, picking off the fish as they go. Salt cod and smoked cod are sold all over the United States, but fresh cod are eaten mostly in the eastern areas.

Dozens of other kinds of fish are fine eating...trout, bass, oysters, scallops, clams, red snapper...more than I can list. You and your family sit down to more than a thousand meals a year...ample opportunity for enjoying a wide variety of fish.

